

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## President Obama Announces Security Strategy for Global Supply Chains

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 26 January 2012

Washington — President Obama has asked the departments of State and Homeland Security to develop a plan to safeguard the international trade and transportation systems from interruptions due to terrorism, crime and natural disasters.

“The United States and nations around the world depend upon the efficient and secure transit of goods through the global supply chain system,” Obama said in his introduction to the National Strategy for Global Supply Chain Security, released January 25.

The president said that in recent years, advances in communications technology, along with reductions in trade barriers and production costs, have opened new markets and created new jobs and opportunities for workers.

“The global supply system that supports this trade is essential to the United States’ economy and security and is a critical global asset,” he said.

In recent years, disruptions to supply chains have been caused by natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions, as well as by criminal and terrorist networks. Obama said these interruptions hurt global economic growth, and that the U.S. government will address the challenges by strengthening national and international policies.

The president said his administration’s new strategy seeks to improve global supply chains to protect the welfare of the American people and to secure U.S. economic prosperity.

“We reject the false choice between security and efficiency and firmly believe that we can promote economic growth while protecting our core values as a nation and as a people,” Obama said. He added that the strategy endorses both a national approach and active collaboration with the international community.

The new strategy considers different methods: building a layered defense, addressing threats early and fostering a resilient system to absorb and rapidly recover from unanticipated disruptions.

“By institutionalizing information-sharing arrangements, streamlining government processes and synchronizing standards and procedures, we can realize new efficiencies while strengthening global supply chains,” the president said.

The departments of State and Homeland Security will lead a six-month engagement period with the international community and industry entities to solicit feedback and specific recommendations on how to implement the strategy in a cost-effective and collaborative manner, according to a January 25 White House fact sheet. Specifically, the departments will seek to refine the U.S. government’s understanding of global supply chain threats and risks across air, land and sea as well as to improve threat detection, information analysis and international sharing capabilities.

Obama emphasized that the federal government cannot improve global supply-chain security alone. He called on state and local governments, the private sector and the international community to work together toward the “shared goal of building a new framework to strengthen and protect this vital system.”

The strategy was announced by Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano at the start of the five-day World Economic Forum in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland.

## U.S. Hits Key Iranian Bank with Sanctions

By Andrzej Zwaniecki | Staff Writer | 26 January 2012

Washington — The United States has imposed sanctions on a key Iranian bank for its involvement in Iran’s sensitive nuclear program, the U.S. Treasury Department announced January 23.

Bank Tejarat, Iran’s third-largest bank, was designated by the department for providing services to Iranian financial institutions and companies that already are subject to international sanctions related to Iran’s nuclear program. Under the designation, all financial institutions must stop their financial dealings with the bank and its Belarus-based affiliate or face the loss of access to the U.S. financial system.

The United States and a growing number of its allies and partners have been tightening the sanctions on Iran to pressure it to comply with the international nonproliferation rules and abandon efforts that the international community believes are aimed at developing nuclear weapons. Iran’s economy and currency have suffered as a result of the sanctions, which have significantly limited the country’s access to major international financial institutions and businesses, according to U.S. and international experts and officials.

“Today’s action against Bank Tejarat strikes at one of Iran’s few remaining access points to the international financial system,” said Treasury Under Secretary David Cohen in a January 23 statement. He said the sanctions “will deepen Iran’s financial isolation, make its access to hard currency even more tenuous, and further impair

Iran's ability to finance its illicit nuclear program."

The Treasury statement said Bank Tejarat has "directly facilitated Iran's illicit nuclear efforts" and repeatedly assisted U.S.-designated banks in circumventing international sanctions. So far, the United States has designated 23 Iranian or Iran-linked financial institutions.

The United States acted hours after the European Union imposed a new embargo on Iranian oil and petroleum products and adopted restrictions on Iran's central bank as well as on trade in certain materials.

President Obama applauded the EU's move in a statement and vowed to "continue to impose new sanctions to increase the pressure on Iran" until it fulfills its international obligations.

In a joint statement, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner said the expanded international sanctions will "sharpen the choice for Iran's leaders and increase their cost of defiance of basic international obligations" regarding the country's nuclear program.

### **President Obama's 2012 State of the Union Address**

24 January 2012

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

Remarks of President Barack Obama - As Prepared for  
Delivery State of the Union Address  
"An America Built to Last"  
Tuesday, January 24th, 2012  
Washington, DC

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, members of Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow Americans:

Last month, I went to Andrews Air Force Base and welcomed home some of our last troops to serve in Iraq. Together, we offered a final, proud salute to the colors under which more than a million of our fellow citizens fought -- and several thousand gave their lives.

We gather tonight knowing that this generation of heroes has made the United States safer and more respected around the world. For the first time in nine years, there are no Americans fighting in Iraq. For the first time in two decades, Osama bin Laden is not a threat to this country. Most of al Qaeda's top lieutenants have been defeated. The Taliban's momentum has been broken, and some troops in Afghanistan have begun to come home.

These achievements are a testament to the courage,

selflessness and teamwork of America's Armed Forces. At a time when too many of our institutions have let us down, they exceed all expectations. They're not consumed with personal ambition. They don't obsess over their differences. They focus on the mission at hand. They work together.

Imagine what we could accomplish if we followed their example. Think about the America within our reach: A country that leads the world in educating its people. An America that attracts a new generation of high-tech manufacturing and high-paying jobs. A future where we're in control of our own energy, and our security and prosperity aren't so tied to unstable parts of the world. An economy built to last, where hard work pays off, and responsibility is rewarded.

We can do this. I know we can, because we've done it before. At the end of World War II, when another generation of heroes returned home from combat, they built the strongest economy and middle class the world has ever known. My grandfather, a veteran of Patton's Army, got the chance to go to college on the GI Bill. My grandmother, who worked on a bomber assembly line, was part of a workforce that turned out the best products on Earth.

The two of them shared the optimism of a nation that had triumphed over a depression and fascism. They understood they were part of something larger; that they were contributing to a story of success that every American had a chance to share -- the basic American promise that if you worked hard, you could do well enough to raise a family, own a home, send your kids to college, and put a little away for retirement.

The defining issue of our time is how to keep that promise alive. No challenge is more urgent. No debate is more important. We can either settle for a country where a shrinking number of people do really well while a growing number of Americans barely get by, or we can restore an economy where everyone gets a fair shot, and everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules. What's at stake aren't Democratic values or Republican values, but American values. And we have to reclaim them.

Let's remember how we got here. Long before the recession, jobs and manufacturing began leaving our shores. Technology made businesses more efficient, but also made some jobs obsolete. Folks at the top saw their incomes rise like never before, but most hardworking Americans struggled with costs that were growing, paychecks that weren't, and personal debt that kept piling up.

In 2008, the house of cards collapsed. We learned that

mortgages had been sold to people who couldn't afford or understand them. Banks had made huge bets and bonuses with other people's money. Regulators had looked the other way, or didn't have the authority to stop the bad behavior.

It was wrong. It was irresponsible. And it plunged our economy into a crisis that put millions out of work, saddled us with more debt, and left innocent, hardworking Americans holding the bag. In the six months before I took office, we lost nearly 4 million jobs. And we lost another 4 million before our policies were in full effect.

Those are the facts. But so are these: In the last 22 months, businesses have created more than 3 million jobs.

Last year, they created the most jobs since 2005. American manufacturers are hiring again, creating jobs for the first time since the late 1990s. Together, we've agreed to cut the deficit by more than \$2 trillion. And we've put in place new rules to hold Wall Street accountable, so a crisis like this never happens again.

The state of our Union is getting stronger. And we've come too far to turn back now. As long as I'm President, I will work with anyone in this chamber to build on this momentum. But I intend to fight obstruction with action, and I will oppose any effort to return to the very same policies that brought on this economic crisis in the first place.

No, we will not go back to an economy weakened by outsourcing, bad debt, and phony financial profits. Tonight, I want to speak about how we move forward, and lay out a blueprint for an economy that's built to last - an economy built on American manufacturing, American energy, skills for American workers, and a renewal of American values.

Now, this blueprint begins with American manufacturing.

On the day I took office, our auto industry was on the verge of collapse. Some even said we should let it die. With a million jobs at stake, I refused to let that happen. In exchange for help, we demanded responsibility. We got workers and automakers to settle their differences. We got the industry to retool and restructure. Today, General Motors is back on top as the world's number-one automaker. Chrysler has grown faster in the U.S. than any major car company. Ford is investing billions in U.S. plants and factories. And together, the entire industry added nearly 160,000 jobs.

We bet on American workers. We bet on American ingenuity. And tonight, the American auto industry is

back.

What's happening in Detroit can happen in other industries. It can happen in Cleveland and Pittsburgh and Raleigh. We can't bring every job back that's left our shore. But right now, it's getting more expensive to do business in places like China. Meanwhile, America is more productive. A few weeks ago, the CEO of Master Lock told me that it now makes business sense for him to bring jobs back home. Today, for the first time in 15 years, Master Lock's unionized plant in Milwaukee is running at full capacity.

So we have a huge opportunity, at this moment, to bring manufacturing back. But we have to seize it. Tonight, my message to business leaders is simple: Ask yourselves what you can do to bring jobs back to your country, and your country will do everything we can to help you succeed.

We should start with our tax code. Right now, companies get tax breaks for moving jobs and profits overseas. Meanwhile, companies that choose to stay in America get hit with one of the highest tax rates in the world. It makes no sense, and everyone knows it. So let's change it.

First, if you're a business that wants to outsource jobs, you shouldn't get a tax deduction for doing it. That money should be used to cover moving expenses for companies like Master Lock that decide to bring jobs home.

Second, no American company should be able to avoid paying its fair share of taxes by moving jobs and profits overseas. From now on, every multinational company should have to pay a basic minimum tax. And every penny should go towards lowering taxes for companies that choose to stay here and hire here in America.

Third, if you're an American manufacturer, you should get a bigger tax cut. If you're a high-tech manufacturer, we should double the tax deduction you get for making your products here. And if you want to relocate in a community that was hit hard when a factory left town, you should get help financing a new plant, equipment, or training for new workers.

So my message is simple. It is time to stop rewarding businesses that ship jobs overseas, and start rewarding companies that create jobs right here in America. Send me these tax reforms, and I will sign them right away.

We're also making it easier for American businesses to sell products all over the world. Two years ago, I set a goal of doubling U.S. exports over five years. With the bipartisan trade agreements we signed into law, we're on track to meet that goal ahead of schedule. And soon,

there will be millions of new customers for American goods in Panama, Colombia, and South Korea. Soon, there will be new cars on the streets of Seoul imported from Detroit, and Toledo, and Chicago.

I will go anywhere in the world to open new markets for American products. And I will not stand by when our competitors don't play by the rules. We've brought trade cases against China at nearly twice the rate as the last administration -- and it's made a difference. Over a thousand Americans are working today because we stopped a surge in Chinese tires. But we need to do more. It's not right when another country lets our movies, music, and software be pirated. It's not fair when foreign manufacturers have a leg up on ours only because they're heavily subsidized.

Tonight, I'm announcing the creation of a Trade Enforcement Unit that will be charged with investigating unfair trading practices in countries like China. There will be more inspections to prevent counterfeit or unsafe goods from crossing our borders. And this Congress should make sure that no foreign company has an advantage over American manufacturing when it comes to accessing financing or new markets like Russia. Our workers are the most productive on Earth, and if the playing field is level, I promise you -- America will always win.

I also hear from many business leaders who want to hire in the United States but can't find workers with the right skills. Growing industries in science and technology have twice as many openings as we have workers who can do the job. Think about that -- openings at a time when millions of Americans are looking for work. It's inexcusable. And we know how to fix it.

Jackie Bray is a single mom from North Carolina who was laid off from her job as a mechanic. Then Siemens opened a gas turbine factory in Charlotte, and formed a partnership with Central Piedmont Community College. The company helped the college design courses in laser and robotics training. It paid Jackie's tuition, then hired her to help operate their plant.

I want every American looking for work to have the same opportunity as Jackie did. Join me in a national commitment to train 2 million Americans with skills that will lead directly to a job. My administration has already lined up more companies that want to help. Model partnerships between businesses like Siemens and community colleges in places like Charlotte, and Orlando, and Louisville are up and running. Now you need to give more community colleges the resources they need to become community career centers -- places that teach people skills that businesses are looking for right now, from data management to high-tech manufacturing.

And I want to cut through the maze of confusing training programs, so that from now on, people like Jackie have one program, one website, and one place to go for all the information and help that they need. It is time to turn our unemployment system into a reemployment system that puts people to work.

These reforms will help people get jobs that are open today. But to prepare for the jobs of tomorrow, our commitment to skills and education has to start earlier.

For less than 1 percent of what our nation spends on education each year, we've convinced nearly every state in the country to raise their standards for teaching and learning -- the first time that's happened in a generation.

But challenges remain. And we know how to solve them.

At a time when other countries are doubling down on education, tight budgets have forced states to lay off thousands of teachers. We know a good teacher can increase the lifetime income of a classroom by over \$250,000. A great teacher can offer an escape from poverty to the child who dreams beyond his circumstance. Every person in this chamber can point to a teacher who changed the trajectory of their lives. Most teachers work tirelessly, with modest pay, sometimes digging into their own pocket for school supplies -- just to make a difference.

Teachers matter. So instead of bashing them, or defending the status quo, let's offer schools a deal. Give them the resources to keep good teachers on the job, and reward the best ones. And in return, grant schools flexibility: to teach with creativity and passion; to stop teaching to the test; and to replace teachers who just aren't helping kids learn. That's a bargain worth making.

We also know that when students don't walk away from their education, more of them walk the stage to get their diploma. When students are not allowed to drop out, they do better. So tonight, I am proposing that every state -- every state -- requires that all students stay in high school until they graduate or turn 18.

When kids do graduate, the most daunting challenge can be the cost of college. At a time when Americans owe more in tuition debt than credit card debt, this Congress needs to stop the interest rates on student loans from doubling in July.

Extend the tuition tax credit we started that saves millions of middle-class families thousands of dollars, and give more young people the chance to earn their way through college by doubling the number of work-study jobs in the next five years.



Of course, it's not enough for us to increase student aid. We can't just keep subsidizing skyrocketing tuition; we'll run out of money. States also need to do their part, by making higher education a higher priority in their budgets. And colleges and universities have to do their part by working to keep costs down.

Recently, I spoke with a group of college presidents who've done just that. Some schools redesign courses to help students finish more quickly. Some use better technology. The point is, it's possible. So let me put colleges and universities on notice: If you can't stop tuition from going up, the funding you get from taxpayers will go down. Higher education can't be a luxury -- it is an economic imperative that every family in America should be able to afford.

Let's also remember that hundreds of thousands of talented, hardworking students in this country face another challenge: the fact that they aren't yet American citizens. Many were brought here as small children, are American through and through, yet they live every day with the threat of deportation. Others came more recently, to study business and science and engineering, but as soon as they get their degree, we send them home to invent new products and create new jobs somewhere else.

That doesn't make sense.

I believe as strongly as ever that we should take on illegal immigration. That's why my administration has put more boots on the border than ever before. That's why there are fewer illegal crossings than when I took office. The opponents of action are out of excuses. We should be working on comprehensive immigration reform right now.

But if election-year politics keeps Congress from acting on a comprehensive plan, let's at least agree to stop expelling responsible young people who want to staff our labs, start new businesses, defend this country. Send me a law that gives them the chance to earn their citizenship. I will sign it right away.

You see, an economy built to last is one where we encourage the talent and ingenuity of every person in this country. That means women should earn equal pay for equal work. It means we should support everyone who's willing to work, and every risk-taker and entrepreneur who aspires to become the next Steve Jobs.

After all, innovation is what America has always been about. Most new jobs are created in start-ups and small businesses. So let's pass an agenda that helps them succeed. Tear down regulations that prevent aspiring entrepreneurs from getting the financing to grow.

Expand tax relief to small businesses that are raising wages and creating good jobs. Both parties agree on these ideas. So put them in a bill, and get it on my desk this year.

Innovation also demands basic research. Today, the discoveries taking place in our federally financed labs and universities could lead to new treatments that kill cancer cells but leave healthy ones untouched. New lightweight vests for cops and soldiers that can stop any bullet. Don't gut these investments in our budget. Don't let other countries win the race for the future. Support the same kind of research and innovation that led to the computer chip and the Internet; to new American jobs and new American industries.

And nowhere is the promise of innovation greater than in American-made energy. Over the last three years, we've opened millions of new acres for oil and gas exploration, and tonight, I'm directing my administration to open more than 75 percent of our potential offshore oil and gas resources. Right now -- right now -- American oil production is the highest that it's been in eight years. That's right -- eight years. Not only that -- last year, we relied less on foreign oil than in any of the past 16 years.

But with only 2 percent of the world's oil reserves, oil isn't enough. This country needs an all-out, all-of-the-above strategy that develops every available source of American energy. A strategy that's cleaner, cheaper, and full of new jobs.

We have a supply of natural gas that can last America nearly 100 years. And my administration will take every possible action to safely develop this energy. Experts believe this will support more than 600,000 jobs by the end of the decade. And I'm requiring all companies that drill for gas on public lands to disclose the chemicals they use. Because America will develop this resource without putting the health and safety of our citizens at risk.

The development of natural gas will create jobs and power trucks and factories that are cleaner and cheaper, proving that we don't have to choose between our environment and our economy. (Applause.) And by the way, it was public research dollars, over the course of 30 years, that helped develop the technologies to extract all this natural gas out of shale rock -- reminding us that government support is critical in helping businesses get new energy ideas off the ground.

Now, what's true for natural gas is just as true for clean energy. In three years, our partnership with the private sector has already positioned America to be the world's leading manufacturer of high-tech batteries. Because of federal investments, renewable energy use has nearly doubled, and thousands of Americans have jobs because

of it.

When Bryan Ritterby was laid off from his job making furniture, he said he worried that at 55, no one would give him a second chance. But he found work at Energetx, a wind turbine manufacturer in Michigan. Before the recession, the factory only made luxury yachts. Today, it's hiring workers like Bryan, who said, "I'm proud to be working in the industry of the future."

Our experience with shale gas, our experience with natural gas, shows us that the payoffs on these public investments don't always come right away. Some technologies don't pan out; some companies fail. But I will not walk away from the promise of clean energy. I will not walk away from workers like Bryan. I will not cede the wind or solar or battery industry to China or Germany because we refuse to make the same commitment here.

We've subsidized oil companies for a century. That's long enough. It's time to end the taxpayer giveaways to an industry that rarely has been more profitable, and double-down on a clean energy industry that never has been more promising. Pass clean energy tax credits. Create these jobs.

We can also spur energy innovation with new incentives. The differences in this chamber may be too deep right now to pass a comprehensive plan to fight climate change. But there's no reason why Congress shouldn't at least set a clean energy standard that creates a market for innovation. So far, you haven't acted. Well, tonight, I will. I'm directing my administration to allow the development of clean energy on enough public land to power 3 million homes. And I'm proud to announce that the Department of Defense, working with us, the world's largest consumer of energy, will make one of the largest commitments to clean energy in history -- with the Navy purchasing enough capacity to power a quarter of a million homes a year.

Of course, the easiest way to save money is to waste less energy. So here's a proposal: Help manufacturers eliminate energy waste in their factories and give businesses incentives to upgrade their buildings. Their energy bills will be \$100 billion lower over the next decade, and America will have less pollution, more manufacturing, more jobs for construction workers who need them. Send me a bill that creates these jobs.

Building this new energy future should be just one part of a broader agenda to repair America's infrastructure. So much of America needs to be rebuilt. We've got crumbling roads and bridges; a power grid that wastes too much energy; an incomplete high-speed broadband network that prevents a small business owner in rural

America from selling her products all over the world.

During the Great Depression, America built the Hoover Dam and the Golden Gate Bridge. After World War II, we connected our states with a system of highways. Democratic and Republican administrations invested in great projects that benefited everybody, from the workers who built them to the businesses that still use them today.

In the next few weeks, I will sign an executive order clearing away the red tape that slows down too many construction projects. But you need to fund these projects. Take the money we're no longer spending at war, use half of it to pay down our debt, and use the rest to do some nation-building right here at home.

There's never been a better time to build, especially since the construction industry was one of the hardest hit when the housing bubble burst. Of course, construction workers weren't the only ones who were hurt. So were millions of innocent Americans who've seen their home values decline. And while government can't fix the problem on its own, responsible homeowners shouldn't have to sit and wait for the housing market to hit bottom to get some relief.

And that's why I'm sending this Congress a plan that gives every responsible homeowner the chance to save about \$3,000 a year on their mortgage, by refinancing at historically low rates. No more red tape. No more runaround from the banks. A small fee on the largest financial institutions will ensure that it won't add to the deficit and will give those banks that were rescued by taxpayers a chance to repay a deficit of trust.

Let's never forget: Millions of Americans who work hard and play by the rules every day deserve a government and a financial system that do the same. It's time to apply the same rules from top to bottom. No bailouts, no handouts, and no copouts. An America built to last insists on responsibility from everybody.

We've all paid the price for lenders who sold mortgages to people who couldn't afford them, and buyers who knew they couldn't afford them. That's why we need smart regulations to prevent irresponsible behavior. Rules to prevent financial fraud or toxic dumping or faulty medical devices -- these don't destroy the free market. They make the free market work better.

There's no question that some regulations are outdated, unnecessary, or too costly. In fact, I've approved fewer regulations in the first three years of my presidency than my Republican predecessor did in his. I've ordered every federal agency to eliminate rules that don't make sense. We've already announced over 500 reforms, and just a fraction of them will save business and citizens more than

\$10 billion over the next five years. We got rid of one rule from 40 years ago that could have forced some dairy farmers to spend \$10,000 a year proving that they could contain a spill -- because milk was somehow classified as an oil. With a rule like that, I guess it was worth crying over spilled milk.

Now, I'm confident a farmer can contain a milk spill without a federal agency looking over his shoulder. Absolutely. But I will not back down from making sure an oil company can contain the kind of oil spill we saw in the Gulf two years ago. I will not back down from protecting our kids from mercury poisoning, or making sure that our food is safe and our water is clean. I will not go back to the days when health insurance companies had unchecked power to cancel your policy, deny your coverage, or charge women differently than men.

And I will not go back to the days when Wall Street was allowed to play by its own set of rules. The new rules we passed restore what should be any financial system's core purpose: Getting funding to entrepreneurs with the best ideas, and getting loans to responsible families who want to buy a home, or start a business, or send their kids to college.

So if you are a big bank or financial institution, you're no longer allowed to make risky bets with your customers' deposits. You're required to write out a "living will" that details exactly how you'll pay the bills if you fail -- because the rest of us are not bailing you out ever again. And if you're a mortgage lender or a payday lender or a credit card company, the days of signing people up for products they can't afford with confusing forms and deceptive practices -- those days are over. Today, American consumers finally have a watchdog in Richard Cordray with one job: To look out for them.

We'll also establish a Financial Crimes Unit of highly trained investigators to crack down on large-scale fraud and protect people's investments. Some financial firms violate major anti-fraud laws because there's no real penalty for being a repeat offender. That's bad for consumers, and it's bad for the vast majority of bankers and financial service professionals who do the right thing. So pass legislation that makes the penalties for fraud count.

And tonight, I'm asking my Attorney General to create a special unit of federal prosecutors and leading state attorney general to expand our investigations into the abusive lending and packaging of risky mortgages that led to the housing crisis. This new unit will hold accountable those who broke the law, speed assistance to homeowners, and help turn the page on an era of recklessness that hurt so many Americans.

Now, a return to the American values of fair play and shared responsibility will help protect our people and our economy. But it should also guide us as we look to pay down our debt and invest in our future.

Right now, our most immediate priority is stopping a tax hike on 160 million working Americans while the recovery is still fragile. People cannot afford losing \$40 out of each paycheck this year. There are plenty of ways to get this done. So let's agree right here, right now: No side issues. No drama. Pass the payroll tax cut without delay. Let's get it done.

When it comes to the deficit, we've already agreed to more than \$2 trillion in cuts and savings. But we need to do more, and that means making choices. Right now, we're poised to spend nearly \$1 trillion more on what was supposed to be a temporary tax break for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans. Right now, because of loopholes and shelters in the tax code, a quarter of all millionaires pay lower tax rates than millions of middle-class households. Right now, Warren Buffett pays a lower tax rate than his secretary.

Do we want to keep these tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans? Or do we want to keep our investments in everything else -- like education and medical research; a strong military and care for our veterans? Because if we're serious about paying down our debt, we can't do both.

The American people know what the right choice is. So do I. As I told the Speaker this summer, I'm prepared to make more reforms that rein in the long-term costs of Medicare and Medicaid, and strengthen Social Security, so long as those programs remain a guarantee of security for seniors.

But in return, we need to change our tax code so that people like me, and an awful lot of members of Congress, pay our fair share of taxes.

Tax reform should follow the Buffett Rule. If you make more than \$1 million a year, you should not pay less than 30 percent in taxes. And my Republican friend Tom Coburn is right: Washington should stop subsidizing millionaires. In fact, if you're earning a million dollars a year, you shouldn't get special tax subsidies or deductions. On the other hand, if you make under \$250,000 a year, like 98 percent of American families, your taxes shouldn't go up. You're the ones struggling with rising costs and stagnant wages. You're the ones who need relief.

Now, you can call this class warfare all you want. But asking a billionaire to pay at least as much as his secretary in taxes? Most Americans would call that common sense.



We don't begrudge financial success in this country. We admire it. When Americans talk about folks like me paying my fair share of taxes, it's not because they envy the rich. It's because they understand that when I get a tax break I don't need and the country can't afford, it either adds to the deficit, or somebody else has to make up the difference -- like a senior on a fixed income, or a student trying to get through school, or a family trying to make ends meet. That's not right. Americans know that's not right. They know that this generation's success is only possible because past generations felt a responsibility to each other, and to the future of their country, and they know our way of life will only endure if we feel that same sense of shared responsibility. That's how we'll reduce our deficit. That's an America built to last.

Now, I recognize that people watching tonight have differing views about taxes and debt, energy and health care. But no matter what party they belong to, I bet most Americans are thinking the same thing right about now: Nothing will get done in Washington this year, or next year, or maybe even the year after that, because Washington is broken.

Can you blame them for feeling a little cynical?

The greatest blow to our confidence in our economy last year didn't come from events beyond our control. It came from a debate in Washington over whether the United States would pay its bills or not. Who benefited from that fiasco?

I've talked tonight about the deficit of trust between Main Street and Wall Street. But the divide between this city and the rest of the country is at least as bad -- and it seems to get worse every year.

Some of this has to do with the corrosive influence of money in politics. So together, let's take some steps to fix that. Send me a bill that bans insider trading by members of Congress; I will sign it tomorrow. (Applause.) Let's limit any elected official from owning stocks in industries they impact. Let's make sure people who bundle campaign contributions for Congress can't lobby Congress, and vice versa -- an idea that has bipartisan support, at least outside of Washington.

Some of what's broken has to do with the way Congress does its business these days. A simple majority is no longer enough to get anything -- even routine business -- passed through the Senate. Neither party has been blameless in these tactics. Now both parties should put an end to it. For starters, I ask the Senate to pass a simple rule that all judicial and public service nominations receive a simple up or down vote within 90 days.

The executive branch also needs to change. Too often, it's inefficient, outdated and remote. That's why I've asked this Congress to grant me the authority to consolidate the federal bureaucracy, so that our government is leaner, quicker, and more responsive to the needs of the American people.

Finally, none of this can happen unless we also lower the temperature in this town. We need to end the notion that the two parties must be locked in a perpetual campaign of mutual destruction; that politics is about clinging to rigid ideologies instead of building consensus around common-sense ideas.

I'm a Democrat. But I believe what Republican Abraham Lincoln believed: That government should do for people only what they cannot do better by themselves, and no more. That's why my education reform offers more competition, and more control for schools and states. That's why we're getting rid of regulations that don't work. That's why our health care law relies on a reformed private market, not a government program.

On the other hand, even my Republican friends who complain the most about government spending have supported federally financed roads, and clean energy projects, and federal offices for the folks back home.

The point is, we should all want a smarter, more effective government. And while we may not be able to bridge our biggest philosophical differences this year, we can make real progress. With or without this Congress, I will keep taking actions that help the economy grow. But I can do a whole lot more with your help. Because when we act together, there's nothing the United States of America can't achieve. That's the lesson we've learned from our actions abroad over the last few years.

Ending the Iraq war has allowed us to strike decisive blows against our enemies. From Pakistan to Yemen, the al Qaeda operatives who remain are scrambling, knowing that they can't escape the reach of the United States of America.

From this position of strength, we've begun to wind down the war in Afghanistan. Ten thousand of our troops have come home. Twenty-three thousand more will leave by the end of this summer. This transition to Afghan lead will continue, and we will build an enduring partnership with Afghanistan, so that it is never again a source of attacks against America.

As the tide of war recedes, a wave of change has washed across the Middle East and North Africa, from Tunis to Cairo; from Sana'a to Tripoli. A year ago, Qaddafi was one of the world's longest-serving dictators -- a murderer with American blood on his hands. Today, he is gone.

And in Syria, I have no doubt that the Assad regime will soon discover that the forces of change cannot be reversed, and that human dignity cannot be denied.

How this incredible transformation will end remains uncertain. But we have a huge stake in the outcome. And while it's ultimately up to the people of the region to decide their fate, we will advocate for those values that have served our own country so well. We will stand against violence and intimidation. We will stand for the rights and dignity of all human beings -- men and women; Christians, Muslims and Jews. We will support policies that lead to strong and stable democracies and open markets, because tyranny is no match for liberty.

And we will safeguard America's own security against those who threaten our citizens, our friends, and our interests. Look at Iran. Through the power of our diplomacy, a world that was once divided about how to deal with Iran's nuclear program now stands as one. The regime is more isolated than ever before; its leaders are faced with crippling sanctions, and as long as they shirk their responsibilities, this pressure will not relent.

Let there be no doubt: America is determined to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, and I will take no options off the table to achieve that goal.

But a peaceful resolution of this issue is still possible, and far better, and if Iran changes course and meets its obligations, it can rejoin the community of nations.

The renewal of American leadership can be felt across the globe. Our oldest alliances in Europe and Asia are stronger than ever. Our ties to the Americas are deeper. Our ironclad commitment -- and I mean ironclad -- to Israel's security has meant the closest military cooperation between our two countries in history.

We've made it clear that America is a Pacific power, and a new beginning in Burma has lit a new hope. From the coalitions we've built to secure nuclear materials, to the missions we've led against hunger and disease; from the blows we've dealt to our enemies, to the enduring power of our moral example, America is back.

Anyone who tells you otherwise, anyone who tells you that America is in decline or that our influence has waned, doesn't know what they're talking about.

That's not the message we get from leaders around the world who are eager to work with us. That's not how people feel from Tokyo to Berlin, from Cape Town to Rio, where opinions of America are higher than they've been in years. Yes, the world is changing. No, we can't control every event. But America remains the one indispensable nation in world affairs -- and as long as I'm President, I

intend to keep it that way.

That's why, working with our military leaders, I've proposed a new defense strategy that ensures we maintain the finest military in the world, while saving nearly half a trillion dollars in our budget. To stay one step ahead of our adversaries, I've already sent this Congress legislation that will secure our country from the growing dangers of cyber-threats.

Above all, our freedom endures because of the men and women in uniform who defend it. As they come home, we must serve them as well as they've served us. That includes giving them the care and the benefits they have earned -- which is why we've increased annual VA spending every year I've been President. And it means enlisting our veterans in the work of rebuilding our nation.

With the bipartisan support of this Congress, we're providing new tax credits to companies that hire vets. Michelle and Jill Biden have worked with American businesses to secure a pledge of 135,000 jobs for veterans and their families. And tonight, I'm proposing a Veterans Jobs Corps that will help our communities hire veterans as cops and firefighters, so that America is as strong as those who defend her.

Which brings me back to where I began. Those of us who've been sent here to serve can learn a thing or two from the service of our troops. When you put on that uniform, it doesn't matter if you're black or white; Asian, Latino, Native American; conservative, liberal; rich, poor; gay, straight. When you're marching into battle, you look out for the person next to you, or the mission fails. When you're in the thick of the fight, you rise or fall as one unit, serving one nation, leaving no one behind.

One of my proudest possessions is the flag that the SEAL Team took with them on the mission to get bin Laden. On it are each of their names. Some may be Democrats. Some may be Republicans. But that doesn't matter. Just like it didn't matter that day in the Situation Room, when I sat next to Bob Gates -- a man who was George Bush's defense secretary -- and Hillary Clinton -- a woman who ran against me for president.

All that mattered that day was the mission. No one thought about politics. No one thought about themselves. One of the young men involved in the raid later told me that he didn't deserve credit for the mission. It only succeeded, he said, because every single member of that unit did their job -- the pilot who landed the helicopter that spun out of control; the translator who kept others from entering the compound; the troops who separated the women and children from the fight; the SEALs who charged up the stairs. More than that, the mission only

succeeded because every member of that unit trusted each other -- because you can't charge up those stairs, into darkness and danger, unless you know that there's somebody behind you, watching your back.

So it is with America. Each time I look at that flag, I'm reminded that our destiny is stitched together like those 50 stars and those 13 stripes. No one built this country on their own. This nation is great because we built it together. This nation is great because we worked as a team. This nation is great because we get each other's backs. And if we hold fast to that truth, in this moment of trial, there is no challenge too great; no mission too hard. As long as we are joined in common purpose, as long as we maintain our common resolve, our journey moves forward, and our future is hopeful, and the state of our Union will always be strong.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

### **American Electorate Has New Face for 2012 Race**

24 January 2012

Washington — A U.S. voting booth does not ask about race, religion or ethnicity. The ballot carries the names of the candidates but not the name of the voter. The only pieces of personal data known absolutely are that the voter is at least 18 years of age and a U.S. citizen.

The composition of the U.S. electorate changes with every election. The voters to whom presidential candidates must appeal in 2012 have changed since Barack Obama was elected in 2008.

"The tectonic plates of American politics are shifting," analyst Ruy Teixeira writes in a paper prepared for the "Future of the Parties" conference at Kenyon College in March 2010. "A powerful concatenation of demographic forces is transforming the American electorate and reshaping both major political parties."

Data from the 2010 census show the minority population in the United States increased over the last decade by 30 percent (Hispanics by 43 percent), while the white population grew 1 percent. The dramatic difference in growth rates means communities of color accounted for 92 percent of the U.S. population growth between 2000 and 2010. The 2010 minority share of the population was 36 percent, up more than 5 percentage points from 2000.

Those figures suggest the share of minority voters should be about 28 percent in 2012, up from 26 percent in 2008. However, raw population figures cannot predict who actually shows up to vote. Voter turnout varies significantly among various races and ethnicities. Exit poll data collected in the 2008 and 2010 elections suggest

minority voting is increasing more quickly than minority population growth.

The strong growth in the Hispanic population is not matched by its voting strength. Only 42 percent of Hispanic Americans are eligible to vote, disqualified either by youth or lack of citizenship. In contrast, 77 percent of non-Hispanic whites and 66 percent of African Americans will be eligible to vote in 2012, according to a 2009 report from the University of Michigan's Population Studies Center.

However, the Hispanic portion of the U.S. voting electorate has grown steadily, from 2 percent in the early 1990s to 9 percent in 2008. Analysts predict that by 2020 more ballots will be cast in U.S. elections by Hispanic Americans than by African Americans.

Asian Americans are another significant contributor to minority population growth, increasing about 26 percent in the past decade. In 2010, Asian Americans made up about 5 percent of the population and 2 percent of voters, according to a 2010 Brookings Institution report.

Another other key demographic for 2012 is the young-voter group — members of the millennial generation (those born in years 1979–2000). In 2008, they made up 18 percent of voters. That figure should be significantly larger in 2012 as more young people enter the voting pool. About 48 million millennials were eligible voters in 2008, a figure that has increased at a rate of about 4 million a year. Political analysts predict 35 million millennials will cast ballots in 2012, an estimated 26 percent of all voters.

Young voters might be the most unreliable voting group in the United States. Their enthusiasm was tepid in the 2010 election, when the 18- to-29-year-old vote share dropped from 18 percent in 2008 to 12 percent, low even for an off-year election.

Religious diversity also is growing in the United States, with a particularly rapid increase in secular voters. The percentage of adults reporting no religious affiliation almost tripled from 1944 to 2004, according to Teixeira, rising from 5 percent to 14 percent. If this trend continues, 20 percent to 25 percent of U.S. adults will be unaffiliated by 2024.

This trend — combined with growth among non-Christian faiths and race-ethnic trends — suggests demographics no longer will define the United States as a white Christian nation when the 2016 presidential election is held.

### **VOTING PATTERNS FOR 2012?**

General trends established over the past four or five decades probably will continue. Young voters, minority

voters, secular voters (those without strong ties to religious communities) and urban voters tend to favor Democratic candidates. Older, whiter, more religious voters and those living in rural areas are more likely to support Republican candidates.

What will be different? Changes in so-called “swing states” that are neither strongly Democratic nor strongly Republican might be key.

Six states (Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin) are all marked by slow growth and by a relatively small and slow-growing percentage of voters from communities of color. These states are projected to average around 15 percent minority voters in 2012, ranging from a low of 10 percent in Iowa to a high of 21 percent in Pennsylvania.

Three Southwest states (Colorado, Nevada and New Mexico) are experiencing fast growth and have relatively high and growing percentages of minority, chiefly Hispanic, voters. These states are projected to average around 36 percent minority voters in 2012, ranging from a low of 21 percent in Colorado to a high of 52 percent in New Mexico.

The three “New South” states (Florida, North Carolina and Virginia) are all marked by fast growth, driven at least in part by their burgeoning minority populations. These states are projected to average around 31 percent minority voters in 2012.

Demographics are only one part of the U.S. election puzzle. Control of the White House and Capitol Hill will be determined by the voters who actually go to the polls. As in every election, those voters will be motivated by enthusiasm and unhappiness, hope and fear, and — just a little bit — by the weather.

### **Bernanke: U.S. Economy Expanding Despite Global Slowdown**

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 25 January 2012

Washington — The U.S. economy is continuing to expand moderately despite some slowing in global growth, according to Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke.

“There’s certainly been some encouraging news recently,” Bernanke told reporters in Washington January 25. “We’ve seen slightly better performance in the labor market. Consumer sentiment has improved. Industrial production has been relatively strong.”

Despite these positive signs, Bernanke said, the U.S. economy has seen mixed results in other areas, such as retail sales, as it continues to face headwinds coming from Europe due in part to the sluggish global economy.

The chairman spoke following a meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee, the central bank’s policymaking arm, during which members discussed economic conditions and the next steps for U.S. monetary policy.

Bernanke said the committee projected U.S. gross domestic product to continue to be moderate during coming quarters, coming in between 2.2 percent and 2.7 percent in 2012, increasing to between 2.8 percent and 3.2 percent for 2013 and 3.3 to 4.0 percent for 2014. He said strains in global financial markets “continue to pose significant downside risks” to the outlook for growth.

He said that while overall labor market conditions have improved, the unemployment rate remains elevated.

“In light of the anticipated modest pace of economic recovery, the committee expects that, over coming quarters, the unemployment rate will decline only gradually,” he said. Participants projected that by the end of 2012, unemployment will have dipped slightly to between 8.2 percent and 8.5 percent. With economic growth expected to pick up over time, the unemployment rate is expected to decline to between 6.7 percent and 7.6 percent by the end of 2014.

The Open Market Committee, charged with fostering maximum employment and price stability, sets the U.S. federal funds rate, which is the rate banks are charged for overnight loans.

The committee set a goal for inflation, which is influenced by the Federal Reserve’s monetary policy, of no more than 2 percent. A higher inflation rate would reduce the public’s ability to make accurate long-term economic and financial decisions, Bernanke said, while a lower rate would elevate the risk of falling into deflation. He said the target should help foster price stability and control long-term interest rates, enhancing the committee’s ability to promote maximum employment.

The committee projected the inflation rate will be between 1.4 percent and 1.8 percent for 2012 and between 1.5 percent and 2 percent through 2014.

Bernanke also said the committee voted to keep the target range for the federal funds rate at zero to 0.25 percent, and that economic conditions are likely to warrant exceptionally low levels for the rate at least until late 2014.

The chairman stressed that the committee’s economic and policy projections are subject to future revision in light of evolving economic and financial conditions, and that the Federal Reserve Board will continue to monitor economic conditions and will carefully adjust its policies accordingly.



Bernanke's remarks came at the start of the five-day World Economic Forum in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland.

### **Secretary Clinton Hosts International Women's Business Leadership Council**

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 24 January 2012

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton hosted the first meeting of the International Council on Women's Business Leadership, a new State Department initiative bringing together successful businesswomen from around the world to advise the U.S. government on women's global economic empowerment.

Clinton challenged the council, which includes women representatives from government, business, nongovernmental organizations and institutions, to develop ideas to help women fulfill their full potential.

"How do we widen that circle of prosperity which will lift the entire global economy — women and men alike — and how do we, within our own organizations, do more to train and promote women to positions of leadership?" Clinton asked the council during the January 24 meeting at the State Department in Washington.

The secretary called on the council to provide ideas about how best to boost growth, mobilize untapped resources, increase productivity and add new value to companies and economies.

"Now, everyone is searching for answers to those questions, but not enough people realize that part of the answer, a large part of the answer, lies with women," she said.

Clinton emphasized that when women enjoy greater access and opportunity, there is a ripple effect through society.

"Businesses have more consumers, families have more to spend, and so it goes through the economy," she said.

Pointing to a new State Department report on the impact of women business leaders on companies and organizations, Clinton said that including more women at the top of organizations, businesses and the public sector is "not just the right thing to do; it's the smart thing to do." She said women's leadership is not only good for business, but also is good for results.

Clinton asked the "truly remarkable group" of women on the council to share their experiences and insights in an effort to come up with new ideas to promote women in business and provide them more opportunities to participate in the formal economy.

The council, chaired by Clinton, consists of 18 members set to serve two-year terms. Its vice-chairs are Cherie Blair, women's rights activist and wife of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and Indra Nooyi, chairman and chief executive officer of PepsiCo.

The State Department said the council will advise the U.S. government "on major issues in international business and economic policy, including the effective integration of business interests and women's economic empowerment into overall foreign policy; the role and limits of international economic institutions from a gender-specific perspective; and the Department of State's role in advancing and promoting the role of women in a competitive global economy."

### **U.S. Seeks Halt to Production of Nuclear Weapons Materials**

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer | 24 January 2012

Washington — At the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament, the United States called for a worldwide halt to the production of materials used in the making of nuclear weapons.

"A verifiable end to the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons is necessary if we are to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons," Assistant Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller said January 24.

Gottemoeller, who is the assistant secretary for arms control, verification and compliance, is in Geneva for the opening week of the Conference on Disarmament's 2012 session. She spoke for the United States at the first plenary session, in which she pressed for the immediate start of talks on a fissile material cutoff treaty. Fissile materials are the raw and refined materials that are used in producing nuclear weapons.

"Some states have already declared a moratorium on such production, but others have not. Some, such as the United States, have reduced their military stocks of fissile material, whereas others are actively engaged in further production," Gottemoeller said.

While the path to a nuclear-free world has many steps, Gottemoeller said, one of the first steps is halting the manufacture of the materials necessary to make nuclear bombs.

Gottemoeller reviewed U.S. arms control accomplishments since the last opening session of the 65-nation Conference on Disarmament, which is the premier multilateral disarmament forum. The forum has fostered treaties banning biological and chemical weapons, as well

as underground nuclear weapons testing. The last major weapons treaty the conference implemented was the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

The 2011 New START Treaty between the United States and Russia entered into force on February 5, 2011. It will eventually reduce the Russian and U.S. nuclear arsenals to their lowest levels since the 1950s.

In addition the U.S.-Russian Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement (PMDA) and its protocols also entered into force in 2011, Gottemoeller told the conference. That agreement commits the United States and Russia each to dispose of no less than 34 metric tons of excess weapons-grade plutonium, which is enough material in total for approximately 17,000 nuclear weapons.

Gottemoeller said that the five Nuclear Weapon States — the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China — have begun regular talks on verification issues and confidence-building measures related to nuclear disarmament, which is part of their commitment to carry out obligations in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

In addition, the United States has been a leading nation in publicly declaring its nuclear stockpile numbers; participating in voluntary and treaty-based inspections measures; working with others on military-to-military, scientific and laboratory exchanges, sponsoring weapons site visits and briefing others on U.S. nuclear programs and disarmament efforts, she said.

Gottemoeller told delegates at the conference that President Obama has committed the United States to securing ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, and “we have been engaging the United States Senate and the American public on the merits of the treaty.”

Earlier in the opening session, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appealed to the nuclear disarmament forum to end a deadlock on disarmament measures and advance efforts to curb weapons proliferation. In a message read to the conference by the head of the U.N.’s Geneva office, Ban said: “I urge you to seize this moment, when the world is focused intently on advancing disarmament goals.”

Ban said that the 65-nation Conference on Disarmament has not produced anything substantial since the 1996 CTBT. He appealed to the world’s main nuclear disarmament forum to move forward after years of deadlock, warning the forum that it is “in danger of sinking.”

“In 2012, the future of the Conference will be under the spotlight as never before. Lamenting the constraints of the rules of procedure or the ‘absence of political will’ can no longer suffice as explanations for any further lack of progress,” Ban said.

Gottemoeller told the conference that the road will remain blocked until all members are convinced that beginning talks on treaties is in their national interest, or at least are not harmful to those interests.

On January 25, Gottemoeller travels to Vienna to meet with treaty partners and discuss arms control-related issues of mutual interest, including the future of conventional arms control in Europe.

### **U.S. Satellite System Saves Lost Hikers, Shipwrecked Sailors**

24 January 2012

Washington — Emergency beacons and high-flying satellites provided critical information to lead rescue teams to the aid of 207 people in life-threatening situations in 2011, according to year-end figures for the international Search and Rescue Satellite Aided Tracking (SARSAT) system.

Downed pilots, shipwrecked boaters and stranded hikers rescued by SARSAT carried emergency beacons that allowed them to send distress signals that could be picked up by satellites and monitored by the Satellite Operations Facility in Suitland, Maryland, near Washington. The monitoring station is operated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). When a signal is received, and its source is located, the information is sent to a rescue coordination center, operated by the U.S. Air Force for land rescues or the U.S. Coast Guard for water rescues.

“With each rescue, this system performs the way it was intended — as a real lifesaving network,” said Chris O’Connors, program manager for NOAA SARSAT.

Internationally, 41 nations and two independent search-and-rescue organizations form the global system to aid the lost and distressed. The COSPAS (Russian for “space system for search of vessels in distress”)-SARSAT system began in 1982 with an agreement among Canada, France, the former Soviet Union and the United States. Since then, more than 30,000 people have been rescued through the system.

A January 23 NOAA news release describes some of the 2011 rescues enabled by NOAA SARSAT:

- The distress signal monitoring system led a rescue team to a group of student hikers trying to fend off an attack by

a grizzly bear.

- Two people in a life raft after a boat sinking were saved more than 220 kilometers off the coast of Florida.
- An elderly hiker, caught in a snowstorm, sent up a distress signal that directed rescuers to him in the mountains of Colorado.

A sailor or hiker who acquires an emergency beacon for safety insurance must register that beacon with NOAA by law. Doing so ensures better and faster assistance if the person must send a distress signal. NOAA's database records almost 330,000 registered beacons.

The 207 U.S. rescues in 2011 compare to 295 in 2010. Records dating back to 2001 note a peak number of rescues in 2007 with 353, and a low of 166 in 2001.

### **U.S. Atmospheric Researcher Wins International Award**

24 January 2012

Washington — A senior research scientist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will receive a prestigious award for his contributions to improved understanding of climate change and atmospheric circulation systems.

Isaac Held will accept the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award at a ceremony in Madrid in June.

In a more than 30-year career with NOAA, Held has enhanced the scientific community's understanding of the atmosphere's structure and circulation. Working at the Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory in Princeton, New Jersey, Held's studies on atmospheric water vapor have led to a greater understanding of how it affects atmospheric warming. Held has earned an international reputation for his unique contributions to the field.

Held was born in a German refugee camp in 1948 and immigrated to the United States at age 4. He says that reading one of the first scientific assessments on climate change in 1972 inspired him to become a climate researcher.

"The committee emphasized studies of atmospheric water vapor and climate change, partly, I think, because of the importance of projections for the drying of the subtropics, including the Mediterranean area, a subject on which I have written," Held said. "There are many excellent researchers pursuing similar studies, and I am just happy to be considered a productive member of this group."

The Frontiers of Knowledge Awards recognize scientific and cultural contributions that address some of the world's most pressing challenges in science, technology, economics and society. BBVA is an international financial

services group based in Spain.

BBVA jury chairman Bjorn Stevens said that while climate change research often focuses on rising temperatures, Held has opened up new avenues of interest that examine the essential role of water, both by studying its movement in the atmosphere and by investigating how water vapor influences the greenhouse effect.

Held's research on water vapor and atmospheric circulation has helped reveal the processes behind the existence of geographic climate zones. His work also helps predict how climate zones will change as the atmosphere warms.

"Isaac Held's choice to investigate the role of water vapor in atmospheric warming was, in the 1970s, a turn down [poet Robert] Frost's 'road less traveled,'" said NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco. "His brilliant research and tenacious pursuit of knowledge have given us a better ability to predict future changes in climate that will result from a warming atmosphere. I am very proud to have researchers of his caliber working for NOAA."

Held is the first U.S. government scientist to receive the Frontiers of Knowledge Award in the climate change category. The BBVA Foundation has also given the climate change award to British scientist Nicholas Stern, German physicist and mathematician Klaus Hasselmann, and Wallace Broecker of Columbia University, who receives funding through NOAA's Cooperative Institute for Climate Applications and Research.

### **U.S. Welcomes Arab League Call for Assad to Step Down**

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 23 January 2012

Washington — State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland said the Arab League's proposal for a political transition in Syria was "quite remarkable," and she praised the organization's continued leadership in trying to bring an end to the Syrian government's violent suppression of its political opponents.

According to press reports, after its meeting on January 22 the organization called upon Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad to transfer power to his deputy and for a unity government to be set up within two months to prepare for parliamentary and presidential elections to be held under Arab and international supervision.

Nuland told reporters in Washington January 23 that the Arab League has joined the United States, the European Union and other countries around the world "in saying that it is now time for Assad to step aside and allow a peaceful political transition to go forward." She said the group had made "a concrete proposal, in line with the

leadership that they have been showing on the Syria issue for many weeks now, about how this could happen.”

The Arab League proposal offered a way toward “a transition mechanism to a better, more democratic Syria,” but “regrettably, Assad rejected it almost before the ink was dry,” she said.

The United Nations estimates that more than 5,000 Syrian civilians have been killed at the hands of the Assad regime’s security forces since peaceful protests against Assad’s rule began in March 2011. On November 2, Syria accepted an Arab League peace plan, but the league’s January 22 report “made absolutely clear” that the Assad regime had not fully implemented the provisions it agreed to, Nuland said.

“We still have violence perpetrated by the regime. The Arab League report calls the situation in Syria a state of severe stagnation and oppression and injustice. It also talks about the fact that they were unable to ascertain the precise number of detainees, let alone secure their release; that the media is still restricted; and that the regime tried to control the [Arab League] monitoring mission,” she said.

Nuland said the monitoring mission, put in place to determine if Syria was respecting the November 2 peace plan, has been “a mixed picture,” but the United States sees no harm in the Arab League’s decision to extend the mission for an additional month.

In a number of instances, the presence of the monitors has encouraged Syrians to leave their homes and freely express their views, both in demonstrations and in interviews with the monitors. Nuland said Syrians were able to help the monitors assemble a list of political prisoners.

But the regime’s violence against the people resumed once monitors moved on to another location. Nuland noted the Arab League’s concern that the withdrawal of the monitors from the country would increase “the danger and the harm to peaceful protesters,” and she said the league is discussing ways its monitors can be in more places. It is also seeking international training and support to increase the effectiveness of the mission.

“We are prepared to support them in their decision to do this for another month, but we would obviously make clear that the job of the monitors is to bear witness to what is happening,” Nuland said.

“It is not the job of the monitors to stop the violence. It is the job of the Assad regime to stop the violence. It’s the job of the Assad regime to pull back its tanks, to allow journalists in, to release people from prison,” she said. “If

another month can give ... the opposition more support, more space to work and to get its views across, and to try to create this national dialogue for change, we don’t see any harm in that,” she said.

Nuland welcomed the Arab League’s decision to become more active in consulting with the United Nations Security Council on Syria, and she anticipated that the league would be making a report to the council.

The United States wants to see a Security Council resolution that “firmly reflects the conclusions of the Arab League report and reflects the various pieces of unfinished business that the Arab League has highlighted here,” she said.

Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman is in Moscow for talks with Russian officials in an effort to move forward on a U.N. measure, she said, adding that Feltman may also be discussing reports that the Russian government has decided to sell 36 Yak-130 combat jets to Syria.

“Obviously, if it’s accurate, it would be quite concerning,” Nuland said of the reported sale. “Our firm belief is that any country that is still trading in weapons and armaments with Syria really needs to think twice because they are on the wrong side of history, and those weapons can be used against innocents and have been.”

### **Obama Administration Details U.S. Agenda for U.N. Reforms**

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 20 January 2012

Washington — President Obama has announced a comprehensive agenda for building a modern, more efficient and more capable United Nations through steps that include increased fiscal responsibility, accountability and effectiveness.

“The Obama administration is committed to achieving a reformed and renewed U.N. that saves lives, keeps the peace, seeds development, finds common solutions to the urgent problems of a new century, operates effectively and lives within its means,” the U.S. Mission to the United Nations said in a press release January 20.

Reforming the organization’s budget represents a major portion of the administration’s new agenda.

“Every dollar sent to the U.N. represents the hard work of a taxpayer somewhere, and any dollar wasted at the U.N. is a wasted opportunity to build a better, freer, more prosperous world,” the mission said. It called on the United Nations to face tough economic times “by tightening its belt and doing more with less.”



As the largest financial contributor to the organization, the United States is committed to ensuring that funds are spent wisely, the mission said. The country has already led efforts to achieve a 5 percent cut in the 2012-2013 U.N. regular budget, saving American taxpayers as much as \$100 million and representing only the second U.N. budget reduction in the last 50 years.

To continue to create a leaner organization, the Obama administration has proposed measures to bring discipline and fiscal restraint to U.N. budgets across the board, to promote a streamlined, transparent budget-making process, and to use 21st-century technology to overhaul the organization's information management system, an initiative that will improve performance while saving more than \$100 million annually.

The new agenda also stresses the importance of accountability, noting that taxpayers around the world "deserve to know how the money they send to the U.N. is spent and to have confidence that every dollar, euro or yen is handled honestly and well." While the United Nations has made important advances in recent years, the United States is calling on the organization to continue to strengthen oversight mechanisms, ethics enforcement, whistleblower protection and transparency.

As a founding member, the host country and the largest contributor to the organization, the United States has a "particular interest in seeing that the U.N. lives up to its founding principles and values" and stands firm against actions by member states that discredit the United Nations and the important work it does.

The new plan calls on the organization to make ineligible for leadership any member state in violation of U.N. sanctions for proliferation or massive human rights violations. It also calls for tougher standards for would-be members of the U.N. Human Rights Council, and more stringent checks on peacekeeper misconduct.

"Billions of people depend, many for their lives, on crucial U.N. services," the mission said. "They deserve a U.N. that delivers real results and that performs — from senior officials in New York to front-line implementers in African villages — to the highest standard of excellence."

To promote this excellence, the agenda calls for the organization to increase its effectiveness through a more merit-based compensation system, reduction of mandate redundancies and new performance evaluations to inform program planning.

The Obama administration said the United States is committed to improving the United Nations because the organization "is among the best tools we have to tackle the world's most pressing challenges."

"The U.N. goes where nobody else will to provide desperately needed humanitarian and development assistance to the world's neediest people, and promotes universal values that Americans cherish, including human rights, democracy and equality," the mission said.

Susan Rice, U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations, said the comprehensive agenda highlights the next steps "in our continuing efforts to build a U.N. better equipped for the 21st century."

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